

COUNTY BOARD MAKES “ADULT DECISIONS” ON BUDGET

The Milwaukee County Board approved a \$1.37 billion budget for 2016 by a margin of 14-3 which makes significant improvements to the plan offered by County Executive Chris Abele. As a result of the Board's work and numerous public meetings, the adopted budget is more fiscally responsible.

The Board's balanced budget includes a tax levy below the state limit and projected inflation, borrows less and uses less reserves than the budget the County Executive proposed. It better represents the needs of Milwaukee County's diverse communities.

The nonpartisan Public Policy Forum questioned two of the main strategies in the County Executive's 2016 Recommended Budget: a use of reserves and the lump sum reduction to the Sheriff's budget. The Board adopted budget amendments to address both concerns.

We made the adult budget decisions the County Executive refused to make. The Board restored \$4 million of the County Executive's reckless cuts to public safety and reduced his imprudent use of reserves to balance the budget.

Abele's commitment of \$80 million from Milwaukee County to the Bucks arena over the next 20 years had a ripple effect which he tried to hide through cuts to the Sheriff's Office. But his deception was exposed during the Board's month-long public budget process, and we accounted honestly by restoring funding for public safety.

All of the net tax levy increase, 1.4 percent, results from the restoration of public safety funding that the County Executive cut with no guidance on how to achieve the reductions or evidence that the massive reductions to the Sheriff's Office could be implemented safely.

The County Executive also relied on increased use of reserve and stabilization funds to cover up higher pension contributions that resulted from a roughly \$20 million pension error that took place under his watch. The Board cut the dependence on those funds with an investment of \$6 million in order to be more responsible. The draw from the Pension Obligation Bond Stabilization Fund was cut in half. Overall, the reliance on reserves was trimmed by 35 percent.

The County Executive also recommended a reduction of meal site locations in his budget. It is incomprehensible that the Executive, on one hand, said the County could afford a \$4 million contribution to a private sports arena, but at the same time proposed cutting senior meal sites. Under an amendment adopted by the County Board, senior center meal closures could not be implemented without further explicit legislative approval.

Other significant budget investments include funding for the Office on African American Affairs, Municipal ID in partnership with the City of Milwaukee, improvements in parks across the County, expanded transit routes to better connect workers to suburban jobs, and restoration of funding for homeless shelters.

The County Executive believes an expenditure reduction is good budget strategy for the Sheriff, so the Board called upon him and other constitutional officers to use it with their departmental budgets. An expenditure reduction of one percent is a fraction of the 12 percent lump sum reduction recommended by the County Executive for the Sheriff's Office. The Board's Budget reasonably provides safeguards if a department cannot achieve a one percent reduction.



The County Board made tough decisions, and the result is a budget that balances the needs of the community with fiscal responsibility.

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